

SUN HOUSE
431 South Main Street
Ukiah
Mendocino County
California

HALS CA-40
CA-40

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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SUN HOUSE

HALS NO. CA-40

Location: 431 South Main Street, Ukiah County, Mendocino, CA
Lat: 38.08892 Long: -123.12389

Significance: The Sun House is significant for its association with John and Grace Hudson. According to authors Lanson and Tetzlaff John Hudson was, "An ethnologist of world renown, a brilliant scholar, devoting his life to research and study, leaving an enduring monument in his Smithsonian collection alone, yet in this town where he lived the greater part of his life, he is remembered not for these marks of greatness, but for the kindly happy noble spirit characteristic of a gentlemen of the Old School to which he belonged ... The Indian race has lost a friend."

Grace Hudson was an uncommonly successful and recognized artist of her time. During her career her work was recognized by the leading art institutes and gained national recognition. She received an honor award at the 1893 Worlds Columbian Exposition in Chicago. She was a prolific artist working primarily in oils creating over 600 paintings of local Native Americans, and was the first visual artist to use copyright law to protect her work.

Description: The landscape associated with the John and Grace Hudson Sun House is located on a 4 acre parcel in downtown Ukiah. In addition to the single-family craftsman-style home the property includes their original garage, Hudson-Carpenter Park, the Grace Hudson Museum and a parking lot. A timber fence defines the front property line along Main Street. Brick columns mark a simple wood gate with a hand-hewn iron latch. A straight, brick path aligns with the heavy timber front door. To the left of the front door there is a 25 foot totem acquired by John Hudson from Northwest Native Americans. South of the front door is a stone bench, and further south is a mature pistache tree – one of six originally planted by the Hudsons.

The front garden is mostly lawn with a bronze sundial mounted on a brick pedestal and a curved brick path leading to it. A mosaic and metal birdbath, depicted in historic photos, was not visible at the time of my visit having been temporarily removed for repairs. The front garden currently has fewer shrubs than depicted in historic photos. Historic photos also show vines covering much of the front of the house which have been removed.

The south property line is defined by a drive to the parking lot of the museum. Between this drive and the Sun House is a garden that includes features installed by the Hudsons shortly after the house was built. Features include a rectangular brick patio surrounded by four rough-hewn stone benches and a raised 8' square

brick planter that was originally a fish pond. The patio is access from a covered brick porch on the south side of the house. Originally there was an unpaved area between the brick porch and the brick patio. Scored, colored concrete was added at this location by Grace Hudson's nephew, Mark Carpenter who occupied the Sun House after Grace's death. Mark's wife Melissa was injured in a car accident and was confined to a wheelchair. This additional paving and a wheelchair ramp were added to the brick porch to accommodate Melissa.

The south garden is lushly planted under the shade of mature Sycamore and Poplar trees planted by the Hudson's. The understory plants appear to be recent additions. Towards the rear of the property there are two other garden structures designed and built by the Hudsons. A heavy-timbered trellis consisting of six 8x8 redwood posts support 6x6 beams that are topped by eight 4x6 crossbeams. A gnarled Wisteria planted by the Hudsons remains on this now deteriorated structure. The area under the trellis is paved with brick and there is another stone bench and a millstone. Immediately north of the trellis is a grouping of flat stones laid in a pattern shaped like a large fish or whale. No reference is made of these stones in any of the material reviewed.

The second structure on the southeast side of the house is a wishing well. A spring was known to be here as early as 1817, long before the Hudson's purchased the property. Grace Hudson had a rusticated stone wishing well with a filigreed ornamented bucket holder built as a present for her husband John.

A driveway runs perpendicular to Main Street on the north side of the property and passes under a heavy-timbered and simply designed porte cochere to a small, one-car garage. Integrated into the timbers of the porte cochere is one of three bells collected by the Hudsons. The largest had been the Ukiah Fire Bell; the smallest was the bell from Redwood School and the third came from the Methodist Church.

Several mature camellias are planted at the foundation on the north side of the house and are likely original to the Hudson occupation. The park to the north of the house includes several mature trees that appear to be original including a very large oak. Several large Redwoods were added later. Authors Lanson and Tetzlaff include a reference to a rose garden as "an early addition" to the grounds but no rose garden remains as of 2009.

The 1912 house is a craftsman-style redwood structure designed by the Hudsons and their architect George L. Wilcox. The house is California Historical Landmark No. 926 and the property is on the National Register of Historic Places. The City of Ukiah acquired the property in 1975 after the deaths of Mark and Melissa Carpenter.

The Grace Hudson Museum is located east of the Sun House. Curving concrete pathways connect the Sun House to the museum. These were installed when the museum was built and are not historic.

History: Grace Carpenter Hudson is the daughter of Helen and Aurelius Carpenter. Helen was a teacher in Potter Valley, California and suffragette, and Aurelius was a journalist who advocated against slavery. The Carpenters had four children: May, twins Grace and Grant, and Frank. The family moved to Ukiah when Grace was four years old and sometimes hired the local Pomo Indians to help around their house and property.

The family recognized Gracie's talent for drawing and sent her to the California School for Design in San Francisco where she excelled. At age 16 Grace won the Alvord Gold Metal presented by the president of the San Francisco Art Association. Upon graduation she was married very briefly to William T. Davis, returned to Ukiah and was divorced.

John Hudson received a medical degree in Tennessee and chose to practice in the small community of Ukiah where he met his future bride. They married April 29, 1890. John's interest in Pomo Indians began when he started treating local patients.

Shortly after their marriage Gracie's painting career started to flourish. Her paintings were published in the Overland Monthly Magazine – Americans leading literary journal and also in Sunset and Cosmopolitan magazines. In 1893 John had some of Grace's photos and the Pomo Indian baskets he had collected displayed at the San Francisco Mechanics Exposition, also known as the Mid-Winter Fair. In the fall of 1893 Grace's paintings were displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. According to authors Lanson and Tetzlaff Grace's painting created a sensation and others tried to copy her style. This led Grace to copyright her paintings and as such she was the first visual artists to do so.

John gave up his medical practice and became an ethnographer devoting all his energy to studying the Pomo. His new work took him to Chicago and the Field Columbian museum while Grace traveled to Hawaii. The couple spent time together in Chicago; they traveled extensively in Europe, and then returned to the west coast shortly after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. Many of Grace's paintings which had been on exhibit in several public buildings had been destroyed by the fire. A few years later they started planning the Sun House and garden.

John Hudson died January 18, 1936. Grace's twin brother Grant died that same year on April 20th and Grace died on March 23, 1937. All are buried in the Ukiah cemetery in a family plot designed by Grace

Sources: Grace Hudson Artist of the Pomo Indians A Biography by Lucienne T. Lanson, MD and Patricia L. Tetzlaff, PHM, Walsworth International Limited, 2006.

Sun House Architectural Assessment by McCandless & Associates Architects, Woodland, CA.

An Architectural Assessment of the Sun House for the Grace Hudson Museum, by Gary Long and Kathleen Hoeft, Long Hoeft Architects, Oct. 1991.

Exhibit material found in the Grace Hudson Museum.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, October 24, 2009
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Front of the house showing the totem left of the front door. Mature camellias on the north (left) side of the house, mature pistache tree to the right. The sitting area is to the right of this image (Chris Pattillo October 16, 2009).



Sitting area on the south side of the house. Raised brick planter was the fish pond - now planted. Benches of basalt stone surround a small, rectilinear patio area. Mature trees provide shade (Chris Pattillo October 16, 2009).